

# Energizing Voters, Connecting Citizens to Candidates



## Prepared by:

Dr. Scott Abernathy  
College of Liberal Arts  
and

University of Minnesota students enrolled  
in POL1914: Generation Now: Young  
Adult Political Action

## Prepared in Collaboration with:

Joe Mansky, Elections Manager  
David Triplett, Elections Specialist  
Ramsey County

The project on which this report is based was completed in collaboration with Ramsey County as part of the 2018–2019 Resilient Communities Project (RCP) partnership. RCP is a program at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) that connects University faculty and students with Minnesota communities to address strategic projects that advance local resilience and sustainability.

The contents of this report represent the views of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of RCP, CURA, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, or Ramsey County.



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### **Resilient Communities Project**

University of Minnesota  
330 HHHSPA  
301—19th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455  
Phone: (612) 625-7501  
E-mail: [rcp@umn.edu](mailto:rcp@umn.edu)  
Web site: <http://www.rcp.umn.edu>



**Resilient Communities Project**

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# **Energizing Voters, Connecting Citizens to Candidates:**

**Research-Based Suggestions for Increasing Voter Turnout in**

**Saint Paul's Ward 1, District 9**

**Dr. Scott Abernathy and  
Students enrolled in POL 1914**

**University of Minnesota  
February 12, 2019**



## **Background and Charge**

In the Fall of 2018, University of Minnesota Professor Scott Abernathy (me) and the twenty students enrolled my section Pol1914 (a freshman seminar) joined in a partnership with The University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project (led by Mike Greco) and the Ramsey County Elections Office (led by Elections Manager Joe Mansky and Elections Specialist Dave Triplett).

The goal was straightforward, though far from simple: to examine the underlying causes of and offer tangible solutions to the persistent under-representation of young adult citizens and citizens of color in Saint Paul's Ward 1, Precinct 9 in the electoral process—to find out why prospective voters in 1-9, along with those in similarly young and diverse communities, remain comparatively disconnected from the electoral process, here in a state with historically high voter turnout rates. In addition, the project offered a unique opportunity for 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduates to learn about and contribute to one of the nation's most pressing challenges and engage with and, hopefully, contribute to the broader community in doing so.

This challenge is not a new one, nor has it been ignored by researchers and policymakers. However, according to the project charge issued by Ramsey County in 2018, "It is becoming clear that traditional methods of increasing voter participation are not very effective... To remain a resilient and thriving community, we need a higher rate of interest and participation among all voters, particularly young voters."<sup>1</sup>

An earlier study commissioned by Ramsey County highlighted these challenges, tying it into the specific socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of 1-9.<sup>2</sup> In their conclusions, the authors recommended that Ramsey County should:

- Collect more data
- Refocus voter outreach & education efforts [including social media]
- Bring voting to the people

We concur, and the results of our research, we hope, will answer previous studies by offering practical, creative, and effective strategies to engage all residents of Saint Paul in the democratic process in an energetic, innovative and effective way.

## **PREPARATORY WORK**

The early stages of our work during the semester involved a review and critical analysis of previous studies of voting and not voting in younger communities and those with a large number of residents of color, highlighting the themes that carried across multiple studies as well as traditional obstacles to overcoming them.

In addition, we were fortunate enough to have been joined by voting outreach advocates in Ramsey County. In particular, we were honored to have speakers from the Wilder Center-Saint Paul Promise Foundation, the Midwest Solidarity Movement, the MN League of Women Voters, and a theatre-based voter engagement initiative, “Dangerous Productions.” We were also fortunate enough to be able to visit Model Cities, and speak with staff and clients from a multi-service adult and youth agency in the Frogtown neighborhood.

Finally, students went on campus to approach and question fellow students about their own and their friends’ decisions to vote or not vote, *and why*. While the cohort of those interviewed on campus benefitted from many privileges far less accessible to young residents of 1-9, the students gained useful insights, as well as honing practical skills in approaching potential interviewees on their own for our major empirical work: as officially sanctioned poll observers with prior permission to administer anonymous exit poll interviews on election day at Jackson Elementary School on November 6, 2018

## **EXIT POLLS**

Over the course of election day, students (in waves) approached voters in 1-9 (after voters had cast their ballots) Students asked prospective respondents to complete a brief questionnaire post-voting (see Appendix). Many potential respondents were initially reluctant to answer questions

about their own vote choices—bombarded as we all are with opinion polls. Once voters were informed that we were not interested in *who or what* they voted for, but *why they chose to vote* and why *friends and families chose not to vote*, the response was strong and enthusiastic. The students successfully obtained 204 completed surveys.

The survey asked participants to list (and rate in importance): 1) factors that contributed to their choice to vote, 2) their use of various media platforms as important to that decision, 3) reasons that friends and family members chose not to vote (since non-voters are much more difficult to reach in a budget-limited way), and 4) certain demographic information. In addition, open-ended responses were offered throughout. All respondents remain anonymous, assigned only a random code for future analysis. The research was approved both by Ramsey County and the University of Minnesota’s institutional review board. These findings were often quite striking, and, combined with our other research, led to our conclusions and suggestions below.

## **THE FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS: PRIMARY THEMES.**

Several themes emerged from our research and discussions, and they overlap in important ways:

### **1. Voices Matter and Stories Can Resonate**

Among the most critical barriers to voting involve individuals feeling disconnected from the electoral process. In short, they do not feel that their voices are being heard or valued. Several of our suggestions are aimed at correcting these barriers. Highlighting the stories of why young adults of voting age chose to vote *or not vote* (as we will propose) will help personalize and make more immediate the electoral process, through brief narrative accounts by real people in 1-9, Ramsey County, and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

### **2. Solutions Involve All Stakeholders**

Rather than approaching non-voting by young voters and voters of color as an *individual issue*, our research clearly indicates that other actors, particularly candidates, are co-responsible in creating solutions. Some of our suggestions involve providing natural incentives for candidates to listen to their constituencies. Others involve institutional changes, involving state legislators

and the Governor's office.<sup>4</sup> Civic education, including beyond traditional PK-12 education can be more effectively employed to foster an informed and engaged electorate and potential electorate.

### **3. The Media Can Matter, but Only if Employed Thoughtfully**

Portions of our survey asked questions about respondents' patterns of and trust in various media outlets when making voting, or not-voting, decisions. Grabbing the attention of individuals, especially young adults, can work; however, media efforts need to be presented in a way that clearly demonstrates why a candidate or office matters to individuals, *and the issues of primary importance to them*. Information needs to be presented in a way that helps individuals understand what is at stake in any government election, in a way that *does not talk down to young adult Americans* or one that assumes flashy, hip, or superficial social media outreach efforts will inevitably work to produce real and sustained interest in becoming life-long voters.

### **4, Connections Matter**

Individuals often feel disconnected from the electoral process because candidates, outreach attempts, and media efforts do not sufficiently realize that the key is to connect voters, prospective voters, and non-voters with the reasons why voting matters to them individually and collectively. In addition, policymakers and County officials need to do a better job of connecting prospective or reluctant voters together, acknowledging that many have valid reasons for their reluctance, reasons that need to be acknowledged, treated with respect, and explored.

## **FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The coursework (involving a few lessons on historical context, data analysis, and even creating confidence intervals), combined with the collective creativity and hard work by our students led to what we envision as steps that can largely be implemented (with a bit of fleshing out). In this brief report, we offer a set of suggestions:<sup>5</sup> Each is organized by themes, presenting key empirical findings from the exit polls and then student-group suggestions for improvements going forward. Note: as some questions ask respondents about behaviors of friends and family members, caution is warranted at times in over-interpreting a particular finding. “[Student



Group]” refers to the collective judgements by groups of 4 or 5 students who self-assembled into specific solution interests and worked in policy analyst teams.

## **I. INFORMATION ABOUT REGISTRATION AND VOTING MATTERS, BUT IS NOT EQUALLY DISTRIBUTED**

**Respondents aged 18-24 were more likely to cite “Good information about registration and voting” as an important reason for their decision to vote than older voters.**

$$*\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0130).$$

**African American and Asian American respondents were more likely than whites to cite “Good information about registration and voting” as an important reason for their decision to vote.**

$$*\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0466 \text{ (African American respondents vs. white respondents);}$$

$$*\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0057 \text{ (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents).}$$

**African American and Asian Americans were more likely than white respondents to cite “Not enough information about registration and voting” as an important reason for their friends’ and family members’ decision not to vote.**

$$*\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0007 \text{ (African American respondents vs. white respondents);}$$

$$*\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0020 \text{ (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents)}$$

*[Student Group]*

These [observations] gave us a starting point for understanding why many younger voters choose not to vote. They feel turned off by the toxicity of politics, and feel that their representatives don’t legislate for their interests. They also feel uninformed with state and city-level legislators and don’t understand what they do and why it matters.

## **II. CIVIC EDUCATION MATTERS, BUT IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED**

**Respondents aged 18-24 were more likely than older respondents to cite “Not enough education about politics and government in school” as an important reason for their friends’ and family members’ decision not to vote.**

\*Pr( $|T| > |t|$ ) = 0.2845). NOTE: Confidence intervals on these differences in means overlap, so caution is warranted in interpreting these results).

**African American and Asian Americans were more likely than white respondents to cite “Not enough education about politics and government in school” as an important reason for their friends’ and family members’ decision not to vote.**

\*Pr( $|T| > |t|$ ) = 0.0361 (African American respondents vs. white respondents);

\*Pr( $|T| > |t|$ ) = 0.0323 (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents)

### *[Student Group]*

Many of the people who responded to open-ended questions on our survey mentioned civic education in schools. This is clearly very important because numerous people mentioned that this is something that schools, and the Minnesota education system in general, need to work on. There is very little civic education in our schools, and for many the extent of it is the requirement to take a civics test to graduate high school. One person said, ‘Teach us how important voting was in grade school! Let us talk about politics, don’t shelter us!’”

### *[Scott]*

While Minnesota, like other states, is increasingly incorporating civics tests into the curriculum or, in our case, into graduation requirements. These are important steps. The challenge, however, is often that the fact-based content of these tests omits the actual practice, contestation, and strategic behavior inherent in making policy on the ground. It sometimes feels like we are training future mechanics [future civic leaders] by focusing on testing in what year the individual parts were manufactured, rather than how they are supposed to work together, or what to do when the parts of the engine [government] grind incessantly against each other, sometimes seizing up entirely [gridlock].

*[Student Group]*

Another suggestion that we have for Ramsey County has to do with civic education, since this was a common theme in the open-ended responses of our exit poll. We believe that sending local politicians to elementary and middle schools to run mock elections is a great way to set a foundation for an understanding of American government and politics. This will allow young children to establish or at least develop an understanding of their voice and its importance early on. The more Ramsey County can stress the importance of listening to the younger generations, the better.

### **CANDIDATE OUTREACH AND ENTHUSIASM MATTERS**

**African American and Asian American respondents were more likely than whites to cite “Contact by campaigns or candidates” as an important reason for their decision to vote.**

\* $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0005$  (African American respondents vs. white respondents);

\* $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$  (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents)

**African American and Asian American respondents were more likely than white respondents to cite “Contact by campaigns” as an important source of information about candidates and issues.**

\* $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0005$  (African American respondents vs. white respondents);

\* $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$  (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents)

**African American and Asian Americans were more likely than white respondents to cite “Not being paid attention to by candidates and campaigns” as an important reason for their friends’ and family members’ decision not to vote.**

\* $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0154$  (African American respondents vs. white respondents);

\* $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0375$  (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents)

*[Student Group]*

It is crucial for Ramsey County to encourage as much community engagement by the election candidates as possible. Whether this be through open question forums, door to door campaigning, talking at local high schools or community centers, etc. people need their representatives to come to them and just listen. People want to be engaged with and listened to, and they want the politicians that are supposed to be representing them to seek out the thoughts and changes people truly want to see.

The lack of contact initiated by candidates and representatives also leaves many feeling unenthused/indifferent to the options that they are provided which can lead to general apathy towards voting. When there is a disconnect between public officials and the general population-potential voters may have trouble relating to any of their options which provides little incentive to go out and vote.

Asian and African Americans were also more likely than white respondents to cite that contact by campaigns and candidates was an important reason for them voting, but also cited a lack of contact by campaigns and candidates as a reason why friends and family may have not voted. This is matters because the very people who find contact with candidate most important are the very people who aren't being reached out to enough. Hence, lower turnout among those specific demographics.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA MATTER, BUT USE IT THOUGHTFULLY**

**African American and Asian American respondents were more likely than white respondents to cite “social media” as an important source of information about candidates and issues.**

\*Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0344 (African American respondents vs. white respondents);

\*Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0023 (Asian American respondents vs. white respondents)

*[Student Group]*

We found that a large number of young voters used social media as their primary source of information. This is why we want to focus on social media because it seems to be the best way to reach this specific group of people. We have all seen first-hand the power of the media. If we can work with Ramsey County to use their social media sites to engage with young people, we could then encourage voting as well as other forms of political and civic participation.

*[Student Group]*

When looking at the data collected from the exit poll surveys, it is obvious that many people consider social media to be their main news source. The social media platforms mentioned most in the surveys most were Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. When asked about their social media habits, respondent 24 responded saying that they use “Twitter because you get the news faster.” Likewise, respondent 36 said that they used “Twitter because of quick info.” Looking at these responses, it is apparent that amongst citizens living in the Frogtown area consider speed and convenience to be a large factor in the news sources they use.

*[Student Group]*

Our analysis of the data and findings we collected has allowed us to develop multiple suggestions for Ramsey County to encourage the 18-24-year-old voter demographic to become more involved. The overarching theme we recognized in the reasoning this age group has the lowest voter turnout in the United States is the common feeling of *being overlooked and of not being heard*. These young adults believe that their voices are being ignored, both by older generations and by the influential political leaders today. The basis of our suggestions is our desire to help this demographic feel heard, we want to suggest ways for Ramsey County to let young adults really express their voices and see the impact they can have on their present and future.

One suggestion that we have for Ramsey County is a revamp of their social media accounts, Instagram in particular. Instagram is an incredibly popular medium. If this account can have a broader appeal, specifically to young adults, then it could be used as a platform that encourages voter turnout. This is where our voter stories come into play. We believe that publishing these

stories is the place to start. These stories allow for two positive effects: young adults will be able to see how other people their age are participating and those who have their stories published will feel that their voice is being heard. Once young adults see that their county is putting a focus on young adults through their social media, they may follow the account. The more young adult followers this Instagram account has, the more chance they have of using it to encourage voting, especially in local elections that are not as well known. This can also apply to Twitter and other social media accounts, but with this suggestion we are focusing on Instagram.

We offer three examples of voter stories, with thanks to students' friends and classmates for volunteering.



“I voted because I believe it’s important that every American voices their opinion and I believe that democracy works best when everybody gives their voice to elect officials that are going to be representing them.”



“I voted because there are a lot of issues going on right now that I am very passionate about and I think that voting is an easy way to make your voice heard and to make sure that things you care about are being done.”



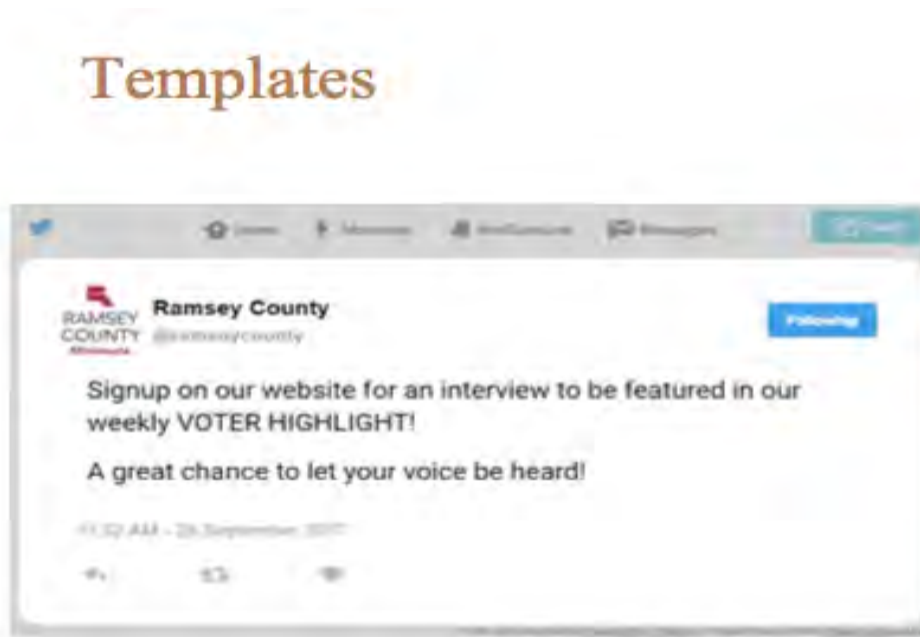
“I didn’t vote for a few reasons. One, I couldn’t find the time to register and I wasn’t really completely sure of how the registration process worked. Second, I didn’t feel that I was educated enough on any of the nominees

Keep in mind that highlighting non-voters is equally as important as highlighting voters. One of our examples shows a quote from someone who chose not to vote. Stories of people who did not vote need to be emphasized as well. In this way, the narratives veer away from an unintentional and counterproductive “shaming” of those who choose not to vote, but foster a discussion about reservations about “Does voting really make a difference?”

We cannot be biased and only focus on one side if we wish to appeal to all potential voters. These stories can be featured on social media and can include links to longer articles about these people’s stories and their experiences with voting. The quotes that are shown next to the pictures are examples of what can be used as a caption on social media. They are mini quotes from longer articles that will catch the attention of anyone who reads them. They are also amenable to presentation in short videos. One can easily imagine a genuine, equal conversation between those who strongly feel that voting is essential and others who question its ultimate utility. This is a fair and useful conversation to have, thoughtfully undertaken.

Running a successful social media account could be incredibly helpful when it comes to gaining the youth vote. However, it has to be done correctly. First, we must identify the audience. While Ramsey County’s Instagram page is not solely directed at young adults, it needs to appeal to them much more than it currently does. This can translate into a specific goal, which is gaining more young followers. The most important suggestion to pay attention to when it comes to revamping Ramsey County’s Instagram page is to *be human*. The current posts seem almost robotic, very little emotion is involved. Don’t be afraid to make jokes and relate to your followers. Once the page gains more young followers, those who run the page (which should be a group of people of different ages, identities, religious and cultural backgrounds, political views,

etc.) must stay active. Continue to post content that is interesting and will attract the attention of youth voters. One way to do this is to piggyback on current trends. Take the time to research what young people are interested in and use this to target them directly in posts. Ramsey County could also look for things they can repost from the people that live in Ramsey County, especially young adults. Start creating relationships with your followers, social media is a way to connect with people and at the moment that is not what this page is being used for.



## **II. CONNECTING PROSPECTIVE VOTERS AND NON-VOTERS WITH CANDIDATES AND ISSUES**

*[Student Group]*

Although there are many solutions to the challenges we identified in the exit polls conducted in Frogtown, our group has decided on one project and three courses of action. First, we propose the creation of a Facebook page that contains relevant information pertaining to the specified community, then use this page as an outlet to make citizens' impact on local elections well known to the voters, provide information regarding registration, and link reliable websites to this page that voters can use to identify their political ideologies and research current events. In this



section of the report, we will explain how we came up with this solution, and its possible implementation.

We suggest this social media solution because of the multitude of responses reporting that social media is the largest news source people benefit from in their daily lives. Many citizens view social media as an accelerated and convenient way to obtain political knowledge. Although many people may suggest that social media is a negative mechanism for encouraging political participation because of its polarizing and isolating algorithms, we can effectively use mass media as a viral way to share details pertaining to local Frogtown elections and bipartisan political events in the Frogtown area to increase and encourage political participation.

“Why I am excited to have finally gotten to vote!” “Why I have been turned off by media coverage of campaigns!” Or even [Scott’s suggestion], “Why I want more coverage of the bureaucracy.” In political science, it is increasingly clear that significant power of large media outlets presents the very same stories (even with distinctively partisan takes). Not covering certain news stories can be a powerful tool of media influence.

Our group identified many reliable websites to link to the web page that voters can utilize:

[www.isidewith.com](http://www.isidewith.com) , [www.mediabiasfactcheck.com](http://www.mediabiasfactcheck.com), and [www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/whats-on-my-ballot](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/whats-on-my-ballot). “I Side With” is a website that contains political ideology quizzes, polls, election info, and voter guides for every state. It markets itself as a bipartisan website. Media Bias Fact Check allows users to review and analyze any given news source to see if it is right leaning, left leaning, or generally unbiased. The Secretary of State website allows citizens

to see who is going to be on their ballot for the upcoming election in their respective districts. These websites lead to a more well-rounded digestion of politics and news.

We chose these specific, bipartisan websites not only because they contain reliable information, but because they promote self-exploration and discussion about the issues, which can lead to healthy discussion and feelings of civic duty and can instill political participation motivation in the Frogtown residents and many other Minnesota communities. These websites are more customizable, interactive, and engaging compared to mainstream news sources.

There are multiple ways we could implement this web page. Ramsey County and RCP could collaborate with University of Minnesota Programs and Departments to identify ways the page could appear cosmetically appealing to Frogtown residents, specifically young adults. If the page appears uncluttered (especially with advertisements), official, and modern, residents will be more likely to follow the page and engage with it. Ramsey County could also collaborate with the Carlson School of Management and brainstorm effective ways to advertise this new page, such as printing flyers and posting them around the area or online marketing. It could be beneficial to continue studies in the area to see which forms of outreach would be the most effective, and what attributes of web pages, such as format and types of posts, could be the most captivating to the population.

Additionally, one unique Facebook feature that could promote civic engagement is Facebook Live. Local politicians could engage the community on its most popular social media platform. This feature opens up many possibilities, such as live streams, Q and As, and political updates

from politicians in real time. Frogtown residents could also film their personal stories, and ask questions to politicians about their stances, current events, and issues, which could be shared across Facebook. This could allow for both increased discussion surrounding political issues and candidate engagement. The more that candidates, or prospective candidates view this as a way to reach voters, then they will be naturally incentivized to help build the Facebook communities.

In conclusion, a Facebook page that includes all of the information addressed above was identified as the best solution to the challenges outlined in the exit polls. Frogtown residents need a hub on Facebook, the most popular social media platform articulated by the population, to promote self-education, so residents can further explore elections and ideologies so they can appear a necessary “attend” to candidates. If the residents educate themselves about the issues and candidates, campaigns will be more likely to contact them, increasing enthusiasm and feelings of civic duty. This productive cycle starts with self-education and recognition that there are many other neighborhood residents with similar interests and concerns. in its ideal form, it could serve as a virtual, welcoming “town hall.”

*[Student Group]*

All of the aforementioned challenges associated with education for young adults on this topic matter is significant for all young adults, but the singular most noteworthy aspect of it all that we’ve observed from our findings is that these are recurring challenges in marginalized and disadvantaged communities, and affect young adults of color more than they do white young adults. African Americans, Asian Americans, and the Latinx/Hispanic populations, along with ethnic groups that fall within and outside those communities are affected most, and

socioeconomic background, quality of education, where these groups reside, and access to resources are all factors that should inform the need for a broader, lifelong educational tool.

*[Student Group]*

Another important part of all of this is that whether young adults know the importance of voting or not. In all communities, there are people who don't know who to vote for because they aren't educated enough on the different issues being campaigned for, who's campaigning, or what different positions in local, state, or national government do; this is and can be a tremendous turn-off to young adults when it comes to voting, especially if they are highly mobile. While there are bountiful amounts of resources, including quizzes, to help voters and nonvoters figure out who to vote for, the majority of them, if not all of them, are presented in a way that is clearly trying to determine which party the respondent affiliates with, rather than the specific issues themselves. If there was such a resource that wasn't partisan in the way questions are asked, then there would be more reason for individuals to figure out who they would vote for. One of the most considerable suggestions we have is to create a self-administered quiz that isn't based on partisan issues, but rather *values and issues of special importance*. Questions would be asked in such a way that the underlying determinant for each question is how significant the respondent considers the priority of the topic to which the question is being directed.

While no doubt offering challenges for Ramsey County going forward, the prospect of harnessing the power of narrative, of bringing in stories of young people and people of color offers the promise of making participatory democracy a lived-experience, rather than a concept that lives only in civics textbooks.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Official exit poll written survey, Conducted at the Jackson Elementary School polling place, November 6, 2018**

“We are conducting this survey with approval from the Ramsey County Elections Office and the University of Minnesota. Thank you for your time.

#### **Survey Questions:**

1. **When thinking about *why you chose to vote today*, please consider *how important* each of the following was to *your decision to vote*.** For each, please rate each on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being “not important” to 5 being “the most important.” Please *circle 1 number* for each response:

	Not Important		Somewhat Important		Most Important
a. Importance of national issues	1	2	3	4	5
b. Importance of local and state issues	1	2	3	4	5
c. Enthusiasm for candidates	1	2	3	4	5
d. Contact by campaigns or candidates	1	2	3	4	5
e. Good information about registration and voting	1	2	3	4	5
f. Feeling of civic duty	1	2	3	4	5

**Please add any comments or other reasons below:**

2. **When thinking about *the issues and candidates*, what sources of information did you use in this election?** For each, please rate each on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being “Not used at all” to 5 being “Used a lot.”

	Not Used at all		Used somewhat		Used a lot
a. National media	1	2	3	4	5
b. Local media	1	2	3	4	5
c. Friends, family, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Contact by campaigns	1	2	3	4	5
e. Social media	1	2	3	4	5

3. **If you used *social media* as one of your main sources of information, please write below which platforms were the most important (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.):**

**What is it about this/these social media platforms that you find most useful? (Please write below):**

**4. For your friends and family who *chose not to vote* in this election, please consider *how important you think* each of the following was in their *decision not to vote*.**

	Not Important		Somewhat Important		Most Important
a. Not interested in issues or candidates	1	2	3	4	5
b. Not feeling represented in politics	1	2	3	4	5
c. Time/work/inconvenience	1	2	3	4	5
d. Not enough education about politics and government in school	1	2	3	4	5
e. Not being paid attention to by candidates or campaigns	1	2	3	4	5
f. Not enough information about candidates and issues	1	2	3	4	5
g. Not enough information about registration and voting	1	2	3	4	5
h. Unable to vote due to restrictions/ineligibility	1	2	3	4	5

**5. If you were eligible to vote in *previous* elections, *but chose not to*, what were the main reasons why you chose not to vote at the time (please answer below)?**

**6. Age** (please circle one)

18-24  
25-35  
36-50  
51-64  
65+

**7. Racial and ethnic identity** (please circle one)

White, not Hispanic or Latino  
Black or African American  
Hispanic or Latino  
Asian American  
Native American or Pacific Islander  
Biracial/multiracial  
Other/none of the above

**8. Gender** (please circle one)

Female  
Male  
Transgender or other gender  
Prefer not to answer

**9. Please share with us any other thoughts that you have on engaging citizens *in your community*. What more can election officials do to encourage voting? What more can candidates do? What more can schools do?"**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Research Team (members of POL 1914)**

Scott Abernathy (Instructor)  
Olivia Beckmn  
Devin Boeing  
Amanda Boll  
Tara Brankin  
William Eagan  
Emma Firstbrook  
Bergen Jacobson  
Chistopher Kupp  
Kayla Larson  
Alex Love

Saillie Lundquist  
Victoria Nikonov  
Kailin Oliver  
Sam Thieste  
Ava Thompson  
Chol Tong  
Der Vue  
Isabella Wartzenuft  
Kelsey Wedding  
Andrew Wilhite

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsey County Elections Office, Inclusive and Meaningful Community Engagement/ RC-13 Empowering Citizens to Vote.”

<sup>2</sup> Heather Heyer and James Hove, “Increasing Voter Turnout in St. Paul: A Look at Precinct 1-9,” Unpublished report, May 10, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> We highly encourage other researchers/student research teams of replicate these findings in the future. Our biggest regret was not having survey instruments printed in a variety of languages appropriate to the precincts’ population. Ours were printed only in English, though friends and family members were able to verbally translate the questions and answer options without guiding others toward specific answers.

<sup>4</sup> While our survey did address several institutional barriers to voting, given the limited time and space in a single- page written questionnaire, we were not able to adequately explore the question of enfranchisement of undocumented Americans. In addition, active voter suppression efforts were not explored in this study but certainly merit future research, though none were directly observed during our research.

<sup>5</sup> Our demographic questions were adopted from the standard census definitions, with options for multiple or fluid self-identifications. Due to the small numbers of respondents that self-identified as “Hispanic or Latino,” “Native American or Pacific Islander,” and “Biracial/multiracial,” difference of means tests were not conducted or reported. In addition, statistically significant pattern differences between respondents identifying as “Male” and “Female” were not generally noted. The small sample size of those identifying as “Transgender or other gender” again did not facilitate difference in means tests.